(c) if not, whether Government would consider the feasibility of evolving a suitable mechanism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRISATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Under the National Old Age Pension Scheme being administered by the Ministry of Rural Development old age pension is disbursed by States/UTs.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is implementing several schemes for the welfare of Older Persons such as Integrated Programme for Older Persons and Construction of Old Age Homes. Under these schemes, Ministry provides Grant-in-Aid/financial assistance to non-governmental organizations for establishment and maintenance of old age homes, day care centres, mobile medicare units, non-institutional services centres and construction of old age homes and multi service centres. National Policy on Older Persons which was announced in January, 1999 *inter-alia* visualizes support for financial security, health care and nutrition, shelter, emphasis upon education, training and information needs, special attention to protect the life and property, provision of appropriate concessions, rebates and discounts etc. to Senior Citizens.

Old age benefits to Senior Citizens

2031. SHRI KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the old age benefits provided to Senior Citizens in the country since India has the second largest population of old people in the world; and

(b) what specific benefits are available for those with no regular income so that the aged live with dignity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI SATYA BRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is implementing several schemes for the welfare of Older Persons such as Integrated Programme for Older Persons and Construction of Old Age Homes. Under these schemes, Ministry provides Grant-in-Aid/financial assistance to non-

governmental organizations for establishment and maintenance of old age homes, day care centres, mobile medicare units' non-institutional service centres and constructions of old age homes and multi service centres.

Additionally, 10 Kg of foodgrain is distributed to each destitute elderly every month under "Annapuma Scheme" of the Ministry of Rural Development, separate queue system for the elderly is operational in hospitals, elder citizens are given priority in telephone connection and grievance redressal by the Department of Telecommunications, concession in fare is provided by the Railways and Civil Aviation Ministries, tax concession are provided by the Ministry of Finance, specific insurance schemes have been designed by the Life Insurance Corporation, New India Insurance, etc. Some public sectors banks also allow higher interest on deposits by the elderly.

(b) The National Old Age Pension Scheme being implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development under which old age pension is being disbursed by States/UTs.

Practice of evil customs

†2032. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that even now the women have to undergo the phase of evil customs like "Agni-Pariksha" rape of young girls by way of revenge, with craft, shrew, ghost-spirit and sati in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government would launch any well-planned programme to curb such incidents against the women;

(d) if so, by when; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI SATYA BRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) to (e) Women, in general, have not to undergo the phase of evil customs.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.